

Pam.
Biog.

Jasinghe



No. 58.

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

LETTER TO PRAYER HELPERS.

KANDY,

CEYLON,

18TH JULY, 1922.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Trinity College has lost, in the death of Muhandiram D. J. Jasinghe, one of its very greatest men—a loss which will seem to many to be quite irreparable.

Mr. Jasinghe was only 58 years of age, being born in April, 1864. He came of a Buddhist family from a Buddhist village, but attending the C.M.S. English School at Cotta, he there became a Christian, and later was to greatly adorn the doctrine of his God and Saviour.

In 1879 he became a teacher at Cotta, when only 15 years old, and was there for four years as such. Then for two years he went to the C.M.S. Anglo-Vernacular School at Hanguranketa, in the Central Province, as Headmaster; he was then transferred as Headmaster to Nawalapitiya Anglo-Vernacular School, and then again was made Headmaster of the C.M.S. School at Katukelle.

In 1890 he was made Inspector of all the C.M.S. Schools in the Central Province, under Mr. Garrett, and so he came under the tremendously inspiring influence of one of the greatest of C.M.S. Ceylon Missionaries.

In September, 1891, Mr. Jasinghe joined the staff of Trinity College as a teacher in the lowest class, and so for over thirty years he has continued to work there. When I came out in 1904, I found Mr. Jasinghe about the most loved of all the teachers and devoted to his work amongst the smallest boys, but I also realized I had in him a man of affairs, and a man of sterling honesty. I gradually got him to supervise all the work of building, and of the extension of the College, and since that time he has built almost all the new

buildings of Trinity, and re-built most of the old ones, besides making its great cricket field, a work few men would have had the patience and courage to tackle.

He also built much of the girls' schools at Mowbray and Hillwood, and at the Ladies' College, Colombo. He erected all the buildings of the Peradeniya Training Colony, and all his skill and all his work he kept for the Mission. His buildings for Trinity College number over twenty, including the finest building we have got, being the new block of class rooms, and as has been said, their greatest work, the great cricket field.

This being their Jubilee year, I was anxious to get some recognition for Mr. Jasinghe, and he was recommended for a Muhandiramship. He was a man who had had some lakhs of rupees through his hands, and yet he had made not a penny out of it. His Excellency the Governor granted him, not only the Muhandiramship, which he desired, but the Guru-Muhandiramship, being the distinction reserved in that rank for teachers. This tremendously pleased Mr. Jasinghe, or as he was called in Trinity in the affection of his boys and the old boys, "the old man." He felt that his work had been recognised as the work of a teacher, and he was proud of his work as a teacher. He built only for the sake of this Mission; he made his great field for the sake of the players. All the time he thought only of the boys, and it was a delight to him to have his position as a Guru recognised. Three weeks before his death he went to the Investiture in Colombo, where he received the insignia of his rank.

On his return to Kandy in his uniform, he did not go to the reception which his family had prepared for him in the first instance, but he went to the Church, there to remain in quiet and in prayer. At the reception, he would have no extravagance and no show or pretence to be richer than he was. When the boys cheered him and gave him a most enthusiastic greeting on his return from receiving the honour, he made them a speech in which he said he was not a College lecturer, nor a great teacher, but that he loved teaching the little boys the beginnings of things, and that he had tried to do it faithfully, and that he had tried to be honest in his work.

All who knew him loved him. He never lost a workman ; he never spoke a harsh word that we know of, nor said an unkind thing about a man. His eye shone with joy and with kindness, and his smile showed the beauty of the Lord his God upon him. As to his contracting, there are no buildings in Ceylon into which more honest and true work has been put than into his. The material is of the best, the buildings amaze all by their cheapness ; in every way he worked to give the College the best possible for the available money, and he himself has left nothing except the tiny patrimony which he inherited. He has given his children an excellent education, and they are one and all doing well and a credit to his training. It is many years since he lost his wife, but with his daughter he kept the home together until they were all self-supporting.

It will be a long time before we meet his match in simplicity, in honesty, in kindness, and in ready laughter.

Kandy did not know how great a son she had until he died. Then his funeral showed that the town had wakened up to its loss, for there were probably a thousand people there as we laid him to rest in the corner of the great field that he had made. And so there is added one more to the great host of witnesses, and one who will always look down with quiet encouragement to those who are following in the race he so splendidly ran.

There has been a great drought in Kandy, and our reservoir sank to less than eight feet of water from fifty, and most of the town was cut off water, except from the town lake. We found it almost impossible to get baths, and the drains were unflushed. I suppose as a result of that we have had the worst term that we have ever had in the way of illness. Our special pest here was measles, but we also had a good many other things in the way of abscesses, sore throats, and so forth. None of our own school boys have died, which is a great thing, but the small daughter of one of our old boys died of measles. Her father and all her family are Buddhists, and the father is the head of a great temple. As the child was dying, they had round her

the Buddhist priests singing the Buddhist chants, but the child, who had been at the Wesleyan Girls' School, asked for Christian hymns. The father and his younger brothers and the little girl's brothers, who had been or were at Trinity, sang for her "Jesu, Lover of my soul," and other Christian hymns. Then at the funeral, the father being a great Buddhist chief, they had many Buddhist priests and a great Buddhist procession, but the father put aside one bit of the funeral as his little girl's special bit, and he had Christian hymns sung in that bit, and asked an old boy of the College, a Christian padre, to preach to the whole crowd, which he did.

It shows how far Christianity has gone, even in a family which is supposed to be, perhaps, the strongest for the conservative religion.

The son of J. P. S. R. Gibson, of the Peradeniya Training Colony, died last Sunday morning, and we buried him on Sunday afternoon. It was a funeral of pure triumph. Bill, after his long illness, was not sorry to go, and he was not the slightest bit afraid of the coming change, and his parents were triumphant in the knowledge that all was well with the lad.

These three funerals, Mr. Jasinghe's, the other I have just spoken of, and Bill Gibson's, must have made a great impression on this place and further, the fierce slanders and attacks on Christians and the Christian faith at the present moment are stirring up interest in people who previously were indifferent, so they come to listen to preachers in the street and elsewhere, and to know what this thoroughly wicked religion really is. It is a case of the wrath of man pressing, and those who would attack us are doing excellent service, even though it is uncomfortable.

Good luck to you all.

Yours sincerely,

A. G. Fraser

Principal